(b) Sir, BSNL is continuously augmenting its cellular network in Karnataka. BSNL has planned to commission around 900 more New Mobile Base Stations to improve the cellular network coverage in the State of Karnataka during the current financial year. SIM cards are released commensurate with the availability of capacity progressively.

(c) BSNL has made the provision for about 2.5 lakh additional Cellular prepaid Mobile connections by the end of March 2006 in Bangalore.

Broadband subscribers in the country

1667. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had set a target of three million broadband subscribers by the end of December this year;

(b) whether the said target has been achieved so far;

(c) what percentage of the target has been met by the PSU operators BSNL and MTNL; and

(d) the details of incentives Government consider to give to the subscribers in the coming years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (c) Government announced Broadband Policy 2004 on 14th October, 2004 with a view to provide impetus to broadband and Internet penetration in the country envisaging 3 million broadband subscribers by the end of 2005 out of which 1.5 million was to be provided by PSU operators, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL). As per available information, the total number of broadband Internet subscribers in the country, as on 31.10.2005, is around 7.1 lakhs. BSNL and MTNL have contributed 3.1 lakh subscribers, as on 31.10.2005, which is 20.7% of target of 1.5 million proposed by them.

(d) The price of Broadband service has come to an affordable level of Rs. 250 and 199 per month being offered by BSNL and MTNL. Government has recently announced reduction in license fee for National Long Distance/ International Long Distance service licensees from 1st January, 2006. This is expected to further reduce the cost of broadband services and therefore stimulate the demand for broadband services in the country.